

# BUYING HELP

## INTRODUCTION

If you don't know what type of product you need, or are wondering whether or not a particular product will work with your computer, then contact *Buying Help*.

If you want to buy a new desktop or notebook computer, please provide details of how much you want to spend and the type of tasks you want your new PC to perform.

If you're looking to buy an upgrade for your computer, you need to include as much information about your current system as possible. Knowing your computer make and model, processor, amount of memory and motherboard model can help us provide more accurate advice.

### Tom Royal

Our Labs Editor can recommend the best product for your specific requirements.

[buyinghelp@computershopper.co.uk](mailto:buyinghelp@computershopper.co.uk)



## Moving from PC to notebook

**Q** I moved from South-East England to County Mayo in Ireland four years ago. My old PC, which runs Windows XP, is living on borrowed time, as I decided not to update it until broadband became available in this area. At long last, and after suffering with dial-up, a faster wireless system has become available: the 3 HSDPA DataModem. Unfortunately, my old PC hasn't got the guts to handle it.

I'd like to scrap my PC, monitor, keyboard, printer and scanner, and replace them with a notebook. I'd like a 17in or preferably a 19in screen, as well as a combined printer and scanner. Portability isn't essential, as I intend to use it indoors with a mains power connection. I would like to be able to upgrade it in the future. I'm prepared to pay up to £1,000 rather than choose a cheaper option that can't be upgraded.

I would like Vista Home Premium installed, along with Microsoft Excel and Access. I also need a DVDewriter. I've been told that an Intel Core 2 Duo processor is the one to go for, but I need your advice on this. Can you recommend any suitable products?

*Carol Millington-Pratt*

**A** With a budget of £1,000, you should be able to easily afford a good notebook computer and multifunction printer, but you might have to choose between a notebook that's upgradable and one with a large display. For printing and scanning, we recommend Canon's PIXMA MP510. It won a Best Buy award in *Shopper* August 2007 thanks to its excellent print quality, and it costs less than £80. This leaves you £920 to buy a notebook computer.

Notebook PCs are less upgradable than desktop models, as it's impossible to add a faster processor or a more powerful graphics card at a later date. Some can have more memory added later, though, and CardBus and ExpressCard expansion slots allow you to add new features. If a 17in display is a must, we'd recommend Gateway's MX8716b (reviewed on page 22). It has a



▲ The Aspire 5683WLMi doesn't have a 17in display, but it is powerful and reasonably upgradable

Core 2 Duo processor, 2GB of memory and a large 120GB disk. It costs £649 including VAT from Tesco Direct (<http://direct.tesco.com>).

If you value upgradability over a big display, however, we'd recommend Acer's Aspire 5683WLMi. It too has a Core 2 Duo processor, 2GB of memory and a 160GB hard disk. With both ExpressCard and CardBus slots, you can add new features in future and you could expand the memory up to 4GB if you wish. However, its 15.4in display is a little small compared to 17in models. It costs less than £800 and can be found at many suppliers by searching for the part code LX.AFQ0X.023.

Neither of these notebooks comes with Microsoft Office installed, so you'll need to re-use your old copy or budget for a new one. Only the Professional edition of Office 2007 includes Access, and this costs £370 including VAT. If you can live without Access, the Home and Student edition includes Excel and costs just £92 including VAT.

## Monitoring the reviews

**Q** I've been looking at your recent LCD monitor Labs review in *Shopper* August 2007 and I'm thinking of getting a 19in or 20.1in widescreen display. I want to know how well the displays you reviewed will work with my basic computer, which currently has a 17in CRT monitor. I don't play games, but I surf the web and create letters and spreadsheets.

My computer runs Windows XP Home Edition and has an AMD Sempron 3000+ processor, 512MB of memory and an integrated Nvidia GeForce 6100 graphics card.

*Clive Braithwaite*

**A** 19in widescreen displays tend to have a resolution of 1,440x900 pixels, while 20.1in models usually have a slightly higher resolution of 1,600x1,200 pixels. They both give you plenty of room on your desktop, and both are great for watching DVDs.

Despite scouring Nvidia's website, we were unable to find an official maximum resolution for the GeForce 6100 integrated graphics chip, but we found another website that quotes it as 1,920x1,440 pixels. This



▲ Mirai's 19in widescreen monitor is excellent value

would give your computer enough graphics power to connect to any 19in or 20.1in widescreen display. We would recommend Mirai's DML-519W100, which costs just £109 including VAT from [www.yoyotech.co.uk](http://www.yoyotech.co.uk).

# Which wireless printer?

**Q** I want to buy a printer that can connect via a wireless network as well as by USB. My other priorities are excellent print quality and good photographic reproduction. I thought the new Lexmark inkjet might fit the bill, but early reviews are disappointing. Could you suggest any makes and models that would be suitable?

*Dr John Wright*

**A** We reviewed Lexmark's new Z1420 wireless printer in last month's *What's New* and found that, although its wireless connection is useful, its print quality was disappointing. We gave it a rating of three stars, making it an average product.

Our favourite printer for those who need both good-quality documents and photo prints is HP's Photosmart D7160. Annoyingly, though, HP doesn't make a wireless version of this printer or any other in the same range, and doesn't sell a wireless printing adaptor designed for it. The printer ranges currently available from Canon and Epson are similarly lacking in



▲ We love HP's Photosmart D7160, but to print wirelessly you must spend £60 on an adaptor

wireless options, too, so at the moment the simplest way to print wirelessly is to add a third-party adaptor. Our favourite is Linksys' 54Mbps Wireless print server, which connects a USB printer to your wireless network.

At just under £60, this adaptor will almost double the cost of any printer you choose to use with it. Unless you need wireless printing today, we'd recommend waiting to see if any other manufacturers follow Lexmark's lead by introducing more printers with built-in wireless networking later in the year.

# Where can I get HannsG 22in screen?

**Q** I would like to upgrade my computer by adding a new monitor and graphics card. I've decided to buy the HannsG HW223DP monitor, as recommended in your recent Labs review, and the Gigabyte GV-RX195P256D-RH graphics card you've been recommending for some time. Unfortunately, I can't find either item for sale online. Could you recommend a supplier?

*Peter Chapman*

**A** The HannsG HW223DP (reviewed in *Labs*, *Shopper* August 234) and Gigabyte GV-RX195P256D-RH are excellent products, and you can buy both online. The HW223DP is available for £183 including VAT from [www.misco.co.uk](http://www.misco.co.uk), and the GV-RX195P256D-RH is £119 including VAT from [www.zomp.net](http://www.zomp.net).



▲ HannsG's HW223DP is an excellent monitor and it costs just £183

# Smart email choices

**Q** I run a small business with five employees. Each employee currently has a desktop computer in our office, allowing them to access email, and a Nokia E61 smartphone for making calls and sending text messages when they're away visiting clients. Our clients are increasingly relying on emails, though, and my sales staff have recently taken to calling the office to find out if there are any new emails waiting for them on their computers. Ideally, I'd like a system where emails are automatically sent to the smartphones.

I've seen BlackBerry devices that do this well, but I'd rather not replace our existing Nokia phones unless it's absolutely necessary. Can I get a similar email service on the E61 or do I need to spend more on new equipment?

*Chris Louis*

**A** Nokia's E61 is a versatile smartphone and there are several ways to use it to connect to your email accounts. The simplest method is to use its built-in email client to access your existing email account. By selecting Messaging, Options and then Settings, you can define settings that allow you to connect to any standard POP3 email account. You can then connect to the account by using the large email button just to the right of the phone's joystick. The phone can be configured to leave all messages on the server until you delete them, so even if you



▲ Nokia smartphones can be configured to use push email

read emails on the go, they'll also appear on your computer. You can set the handset to check for email at regular intervals, which is convenient but will use a lot of expensive data, or only when you choose to check.

This system can be convenient, but it's not the same as the one provided by BlackBerry. The BlackBerry system provides what's known as push email, so whenever an email arrives in your account it is immediately pushed out to the handset. This means that, unlike POP3, there need be no delay between an email arriving and you seeing it. Fortunately, there are several ways to configure push email on the E61.

One of the simplest is to use the well-known BlackBerry server system itself. Nokia provides a BlackBerry client for most of its business smartphones and you can download it from [www.businesssoftware.nokia.com/bc\\_search.php](http://www.businesssoftware.nokia.com/bc_search.php). To

complete the system, you'll either need to install the BlackBerry server software on your own email server or pay a service provider to run a system for you remotely. Most major UK mobile phone networks provide BlackBerry services. Alternatively, your existing email provider might offer a different push email service. Fasthosts.co.uk, which sells standard POP3 and remote Exchange email accounts, offers mobile push email access using the Motorola Good Mobile Messaging system, which also works with the E61. An Exchange email account with Good push access costs £9.99 per month.

# Processor power-up

**Q** After reading your review, I bought a PC Nextday Zoostorm 1-3401 computer, which has a Socket 939 processor socket. I would now like to add some more processing power so that I can play more demanding games. I am on a fairly tight budget, so I don't think that I can afford to upgrade to an AM2 motherboard, processor and memory. Can you recommend a processor upgrade that will give me some extra power?

*Chris Ardron*

**A** PC Nextday's Zoostorm 1-3401 Versatile PC (reviewed in *Labs*, *Shopper* 221) uses an ECS nForce4 A939 motherboard. This motherboard supports several faster processors than the AMD Athlon 64 3700+ installed as standard. AMD's Athlon 64 X2 3800+ chip, which costs around £60, would allow you to upgrade your computer to dual core. This would make some tasks such as video encoding far faster, but it might not have a huge effect on current games.

If gaming is your main priority, we recommend the AMD Athlon 64 4000+ instead. This extremely quick single-core chip costs around £40 and should give your computer a significant boost in games. Remember that before installing either new processor, you'll need to upgrade your motherboard's BIOS with the latest version from the ECS website. ☐